Some zoological parks may require their caretakers to have a bachelor's degree in biology, animal science, or a related field. Most require experience with animals, preferably as a volunteer or paid keeper in a zoo. Zoo keepers may advance to senior keeper, assistant head keeper, head keeper, and assistant curator, but few openings occur, especially for the higher-level positions.

Animal caretakers in animal shelters are not required to have any specialized training, but training programs and workshops are increasingly available through the Humane Society of the United States, the American Humane Association, and the National Animal Control Association. Workshop topics include cruelty investigations, appropriate methods of euthanasia for shelter animals, and techniques for preventing problems with wildlife. With experience and additional training, caretakers in animal shelters may become adoption coordinators, animal control officers, emergency rescue drivers, assistant shelter managers, or shelter directors.

Job Outlook

Employment opportunities for animal caretakers and veterinary assistants generally are expected to be good. The outlook for caretakers in zoos, however, is not favorable; jobseekers will face keen competition because of expected slow growth in zoo capacity, low turnover, and the fact that the occupation attracts many candidates.

Employment is expected to grow faster than the average through 2008. The growth of the pet population, which drives employment of animal caretakers in kennels, grooming shops, animal shelters, and veterinary clinics and hospitals, is expected to slow. Nevertheless, pets remain popular and pet owners—including a large number of baby boomers whose disposable income is expected to increase as they age—may increasingly take advantage of grooming services, daily and overnight boarding services, and veterinary services, spurring employment growth for animal caretakers and veterinary assistants. Demand for animal caretakers in animal shelters is expected to remain steady. Communities are increasingly recognizing the connection between animal abuse and abuse toward humans, and should continue to commit funds to animal shelters, many of which are working hand-in-hand with social service agencies and law enforcement teams.

Despite growth in demand for animal caretakers, the overwhelming majority of jobs will result from the need to replace workers leaving the field. Many animal caretaker jobs that require little or no training have work schedules that tend to be flexible; therefore, it is ideal for people seeking their first job and for students and others looking for temporary or part-time work. Because turnover is quite high, largely due to the hard physical labor, the overall availability of jobs should be very good. Much of the work of animal caretakers is seasonal, particularly during vacation periods.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of nonfarm animal caretakers were $7.12 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between $5.92 and $8.82. The bottom 10 percent earned less than $5.54 and the top 10 percent earned more than $11.39. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of nonfarm animal caretakers in 1997 are shown below:

Local government, except education and hospitals	$10.40
Commercial sports	7.60
Animal services, except veterinary	7.10
Membership organizations, not elsewhere classified	6.60
Veterinary services	6.20

Median hourly earnings of veterinary assistants were $7.79 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between $6.55 and $9.23. The lowest 10 percent earned less than $5.79 and the top 10 percent earned more than $10.80.

Related Occupations

Others who work extensively with animals include animal breeders, animal trainers, livestock farm workers, ranchers, veterinarians, veterinary technicians and technologists, and wildlife biologists and zoologists.

Sources of Additional Information

For more information on jobs in animal caretaking and control, and the animal shelter and control personnel training program, write to:

☛ The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. NW., Washington, DC 20037-1598. Internet: **http://www.hsus.org**

☛ National Animal Control Association, P.O. Box 480851, Kansas City, MO 64148-0851.

To obtain a listing of State-licensed grooming schools, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

☛ National Dog Groomers Association of America, Box 101, Clark, PA 16113.

For information on training and certification of kennel staff and owners, contact:

☛ American Boarding Kennels Association, 4575 Galley Rd., Suite 400A, Colorado Springs, CO 80915. Internet: **http://www.abka.com**

For information on laboratory animal technicians and certification, contact:

☛ American Association for Laboratory Animal Science, 9190 Crestwyn Hills Drive, Memphis, TN 38125.

Protective Service Occupations

Correctional Officers

(O*NET 61099E and 63017)

Significant Points

- The work can be stressful because of concern for personal safety.
- Job opportunities are expected to be very favorable due to much faster than average employment growth coupled with high turnover.
- Most jobs are in large regional jails or in prisons in rural areas.

Nature of the Work

Correctional officers are responsible for overseeing individuals who have been arrested and are awaiting trial or who have been convicted of a crime and sentenced to serve time in a jail, reformatory, or penitentiary. They maintain security and inmate accountability in order to prevent disturbances, assaults, or escapes. Officers have no law enforcement responsibilities outside the institution where they work. (For more information on related occupations, see the statement on police and detectives elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Police and sheriffs' departments in county and municipal jails or precinct station houses employ many correctional officers, also known as detention officers. Most of the approximately 3,300 jails in the United States are operated by county governments, with about three-quarters of all jails under the jurisdiction of an elected sheriff. Individuals in the jail population change constantly as

some are released, some are convicted and transferred to prison, and new offenders are arrested and enter the system. Correctional officers in the American jail system hold and process more than 22 million people a year, with about half a million offenders in jail at any given time. When individuals are first arrested, the jail staff may not know their true identity or criminal record, and violent detainees may be placed in the general population. This is the most dangerous phase of the incarceration process for correctional officers.

Most correctional officers are employed in large regional jails or State and Federal prisons, watching over the approximately one million offenders who are incarcerated in Federal and State prisons at any given time. In addition to jails and prisons, a relatively small number of correctional officers oversee individuals being held by the Immigration and Naturalization Service before they are released or deported, or they work for correctional institutions that are run by private for-profit organizations. While both jails and prisons can be dangerous places to work, prison populations are more stable than jail populations, and correctional officers in prisons know the security and custodial requirements of the prisoners with whom they are dealing.

Regardless of the setting, correctional officers maintain order within the institution, and enforce rules and regulations. To help ensure that inmates are orderly and obey rules, correctional officers monitor the activities and supervise the work assignments of inmates. Sometimes, it is necessary for officers to search inmates and their living quarters for contraband like weapons or drugs, settle disputes between inmates, and enforce discipline. Correctional officers periodically inspect the facilities, checking cells and other areas of the institution for unsanitary conditions, contraband, fire hazards, and any evidence of infractions of rules. In addition, they routinely inspect locks, window bars, grilles, doors, and gates for signs of tampering. Finally, officers inspect mail and visitors for prohibited items.

Correctional officers report orally and in writing on inmate conduct and on the quality and quantity of work done by inmates. Officers also report security breaches, disturbances, violations of rules, and any unusual occurrences. They usually keep a daily log or record of their activities. Correctional officers cannot show favoritism and must report any inmate who violates the rules. Should the situation arise, they help the responsible law enforcement authorities investigate crimes committed within their institution or search for escaped inmates.

In jail and prison facilities with direct supervision cellblocks, officers work unarmed. They are equipped with communications devices so that they can summon help if necessary. These officers often work in a cell block alone, or with another officer, among the 50 to 100 inmates who reside there. The officers enforce regulations primarily through their interpersonal communications skills and the use of progressive sanctions, such as loss of some privileges.

More correctional officers are needed to oversee the growing number of inmates held in jails and prisons.

In the highest security facilities where the most dangerous inmates are housed, correctional officers often monitor the activities of prisoners from a centralized control center with the aid of closed circuit television cameras and a computer tracking system. In such an environment, the inmates may not see anyone but officers for days or weeks at a time and only leave their cells for showers, solitary exercise time, or visitors. Depending on the offender's security classification within the institution, correctional officers may have to restrain inmates in handcuffs and leg irons in order to safely escort them to and from cells and other areas to see authorized visitors. Officers also escort prisoners between the institution and courtrooms, medical facilities, and other destinations outside the institution.

Working Conditions

Working in a correctional institution can be stressful and hazardous. Every year, a number of correctional officers are injured in confrontations with inmates in the process of carrying out their daily duties. Correctional officers may work indoors or outdoors, depending on their specific duties. Some correctional institutions are well lit, temperature controlled, and ventilated, while others are old, overcrowded, hot, and noisy. Correctional officers usually work an 8-hour day, 5 days a week, on rotating shifts. Prison and jail security must be provided around the clock, which often means that officers work all hours of the day and night, weekends, and holidays. In addition, officers may be required to work paid overtime.

Employment

Correctional officers held about 383,000 jobs in 1998. Almost six of every 10 worked at State correctional institutions such as prisons, prison camps, and youth correctional facilities. Most of the remainder worked at city and county jails or other institutions run by local governments. About 12,000 correctional officers worked in Federal correctional institutions, and about 10,400 worked in privately owned and managed prisons.

Most correctional officers work in large institutions located in rural areas, although a significant number work in jails and other facilities located in law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most institutions require that correctional officers be at least 18 to 21 years of age, have a high school education or its equivalent, have no felony convictions, and be a United States citizen. Promotion prospects may be enhanced through obtaining a postsecondary education.

Correctional officers must be in good health. Candidates for employment are generally required to meet formal standards of physical fitness, eyesight, and hearing. In addition, many jurisdictions use standard tests to determine applicant suitability to work in a correctional environment. Good judgment and the ability to think and act quickly are indispensable. Applicants are typically screened for drug abuse, subject to background checks, and required to pass a written examination.

Federal, State, and some local departments of corrections provide training for correctional officers based on guidelines established by the American Correctional Association and the American Jail Association. Some States have regional training academies which are available to local agencies. All States and local correctional agencies provide on-the-job training at the conclusion of formal instruction, including legal restrictions and interpersonal relations. Many systems require firearms proficiency and self-defense skills. Officer trainees typically receive several weeks or months of training in an actual job setting under the supervision of an experienced officer. Nevertheless, specific entry requirements and on-the-job training vary widely from agency to agency.

Academy trainees generally receive instruction on a number of subjects, including institutional policies, regulations, and operations, as well as custody and security procedures. As a condition of employment, new Federal correctional officers must undergo 200 hours

of formal training within the first year of employment. They also must complete 120 hours of specialized training at the Federal Bureau of Prisons residential training center at Glynco, Georgia within the first 60 days after appointment. Experienced officers receive annual in-service training to keep abreast of new developments and procedures.

Some correctional officers are members of prison tactical response teams, which are trained to respond to disturbances, riots, hostage situations, forced cell moves, and other potentially dangerous confrontations. Team members receive training and practice with weapons, chemical agents, forced entry methods, crisis management, and other tactics.

With education, experience, and training, qualified officers may advance to correctional sergeant. Correctional sergeants supervise correctional officers and usually are responsible for maintaining security and directing the activities of other officers during an assigned shift or in an assigned area. Ambitious and qualified correctional officers can be promoted to supervisory or administrative positions all the way up to warden. Officers sometimes transfer to related areas, such as probation or parole officer.

Job Outlook

Job opportunities for correctional officers are expected to be very favorable through 2008. The need to replace correctional officers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force, coupled with rising employment demand, will generate thousands of job openings each year. In the past, some local and State corrections agencies have experienced difficulty in attracting and keeping qualified applicants, largely due to relatively low salaries and the concentration of jobs in rural locations. This situation is expected to continue.

Employment of correctional officers is expected to increase much faster than the average for all occupations through 2008, as additional officers are hired to supervise and control a growing inmate population. Increasing public concern about the spread of crime and illegal drugs—resulting in more arrests and convictions—and the adoption of mandatory sentencing guidelines calling for longer sentences and reduced parole for inmates will spur demand for correctional officers. Moreover, expansion and new construction of corrections facilities also are expected to create many new jobs for correctional officers, although State and local government budgetary constraints could affect the rate at which new facilities are built and staffed. Some employment opportunities will also arise in the private sector as public authorities contract with private companies to provide and staff corrections facilities.

Layoffs of correctional officers are rare because of increasing offender populations. While officers are allowed to join bargaining units, they are not allowed to strike.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of correctional officers were $28,540 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between $22,930 and $37,550. The lowest 10 percent had earnings of less than $18,810, while the top 10 percent earned over $46,320. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of correctional officers in 1997 in the public sector were $32,600 in the Federal Government, $29,700 in local government, and $27,300 in State government. In the management and public relations industry, where officers employed by privately operated prisons are classified, median annual earnings were $18,500.

According to a 1999 survey in *Corrections Compendium*, a national journal for corrections professionals, there is no common pattern or trend in correctional salaries around the United States. The variance between the low and high starting salaries exists for all positions and personnel of all experience levels. Beginning salaries for State correctional officers ranged from $14,600 in California to $34,100 in New Jersey. The median salary for correctional officers with more than one year of experience ranged from $18,000 in Mississippi to $44,800 in New Jersey.

At the Federal level, the starting salary was about $20,600 to $23,000 a year in 1999. Correctional officers rated Senior Officer Specialist, who are required to be able to work any correctional post within an institution, started at about $28,200 a year. Starting salaries were slightly higher in selected areas where prevailing local pay levels were higher. The annual average salary for correctional officers employed by the Federal Government was $36,500 in early 1999.

In addition to typical benefits, correctional officers employed in the public sector usually are provided with uniforms or a clothing allowance to purchase their own uniforms. Civil service systems or merit boards cover officers employed by the Federal Government and most State governments. Their retirement coverage entitles them to retire at age 50 after 20 years of service or at any age with 25 years of service.

Related Occupations

A number of options are available to those interested in careers in protective services and security. House or store detectives patrol business establishments to protect against theft and vandalism and to enforce standards of good behavior. Security guards protect people and property against theft, vandalism, illegal entry, and fire. Police officers and deputy sheriffs maintain law and order, prevent crime, and arrest offenders. Probation and parole officers monitor and counsel offenders in the community and evaluate their progress in becoming productive members of society. Some of these related occupations are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about correctional jobs in a jail setting is available from:

☛ The American Jail Association, 2053 Day Rd., Suite 100, Hagerstown, MD 21740. Internet: **http://www.corrections.com/aja/index.html**

For information about careers as a correctional officer in jails and prisons, contact:

☛ The International Association of Correctional Officers (IACO), P.O. Box 81826, Lincoln, NE 68501.
Internet: **http://www.acsp.uic.edu/iaco**

Information on entrance requirements, training, and career opportunities for correctional officers on the Federal level may be obtained by calling the Federal Bureau of Prisons at (800) 347-7744.
Internet: **http://www.bop.gov**

Information on obtaining a job with the Federal Government is available from the Office of Personnel Management through a telephone-based system. Consult your telephone directory under U.S. Government for a local number or call (912) 757-3000; TDD (912) 744-2299. The number is not toll free and charges may result.
Internet: **http://www.usajobs.opm.gov**

Fire Fighting Occupations

(O*NET 61002A, 61002B, 63002A, 63002B, 63005, 63008A, and 63008B)

Significant Points

- Fire fighting involves hazardous conditions and long, irregular hours.
- Keen competition for jobs is expected; many people are attracted to the occupation because it provides considerable job security and the opportunity to perform an essential public service.

Nature of the Work

Every year, fires and other emergencies take thousands of lives and destroy property worth billions of dollars. Firefighters help protect the public against these dangers by rapidly responding to a variety of